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University Archives and Special Collections Centre

Collection Care and Conservation Policy

Contents

1. Introduction and purpose of this Policy

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Mission Statement

1.3 Purpose

2. Governance

3. Resources

4. Storage

4.1 On site

4.2 Off site

5. Collection care and assessment

6. Preservation

7. Disaster planning and response

8. Approval

9. Version Control

1.1 Introduction

The University Archives and Special Collections Centre aims to ensure that risks to collections in its care are assessed and removed or mitigated. To achieve this, specific collection care standards have been developed and policies put into place to support and maintain them.

1.2 Mission Statement

The University Archives and Special Collections Centre supports the vision of Library Services to deliver integrated academic and pastoral support to enable the development of creativity and resilience, so that students can fulfil their potential and get the best from their university experience.

Our mission is to provide high quality anticipatory and responsive library and student support offers that are tailored to meet the needs of our students and staff and reflect UAL's academic profile.

We achieve this through our core values of:

- Being student-centred, accessible and inclusive
- Celebrating diversity and respecting individuality
- Encouraging curiosity and supporting risk-taking to enable creativity and resilience
- Being committed to critical reflection and continuous improvement
- Innovating and leading in our areas of professional and academic expertise
- Forging effective and creative collaborations internally and externally

1.3 Purpose

This Collection Care and Conservation Policy aims to outline the governance, resourcing, disaster preparedness and response for archive, museum and special collections across UAL, as well as the care and conservation of collections at the University Archives and Special Collections Centre and other UAL managed sites.

2. Governance

University Archives and Special Collections Centre sits under the governance of the Directorate of Library and Student Support Services. The Associate Director (Content and Discovery) has overall responsibility for collection development and management and line manages the Archives and Special Collections Centre Manager.

Also within the Directorate of Library and Student Support Services sits the London College of Fashion Archives Manager and collection management teams within each of the six libraries of UAL. Central Saint Martins (CSM) has an accredited museum, which is governed by CSM College.

The Archives and Special Collections Centre Manager convenes a Community of Practice for archives, museum and special collections managers across UAL, which facilitates a diverse exchange of knowledge and skills between members; provides guidance on issues related to the development and management of archives, museum and special collections and encourages consistent professional practice following recognised standards within these professions.

The UAL Archives, Museum and Special Collections Advisory Board, on behalf of the University, maintains an oversight of the care, development and exploitation of the University's archives,

museum and special collections in order to maximise their potential to support and enhance teaching, learning and research activities across the University.

It provides strategic guidance on policy matters and facilitates collaboration and resource sharing where this is appropriate. It acts as an essential communication channel for those involved in managing, curating and using collections.

3. Resources

The Archives and Special Collections Centre is financed by allocated staffing and non-staffing budgets from the Directorate of Library and Student Support Services. These cover substantive staff posts to deliver the services of the Centre and non-staff costs such as annual maintenance and ongoing development and conservation costs.

The ASCC does not have an acquisitions budget other than to develop the Art Collection. Other collections are acquired through donations. See the Acquisitions Policy for details.

For the period 2018-2022/3 ASCC has been in receipt of Research England Higher Education Museum and Galleries Fund.

4. Storage

4.1 On-site

The University Archives and Special Collections Centre was built in 2007-8 to comply as closely as possible with PD5454 *Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents*.

It has been maintained to this standard and the subsequent recommendation of newly developed British Standards:

BS EN 4971:2017 *Conservation and care of archive and library collections*

BS EN 16893:2018 *Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections*

These standards are currently being applied to the plans to develop a new site for the LCC, which will hold a dedicated space for the ASCC, due to be completed in 2025. They are also being applied to the development of the new LCF development at Stratford, due to open in 2023.

These standards also apply at the CSM Accredited Museum.

Collections at other location across UAL do not currently comply as closely as desired with these standards. These collections are managed within resource constraints and continuous improvement opportunities are sought, such as the development of new sites or the refurbishment of existing spaces to improve storage and access facilities.

4.2 Off-site

The UAL Art Collection is stored off-site in a secure gallery storage environment. Regular condition checks are carried out by the supplier and by the Co-ordinator of the Collection. A review of off-site storage options is currently under review.

5. Collection care and assessment

The ASCC holds materials in a variety of formats including paper, photography, art works, objects, digital carriers.

Assessments of archives and special collections are carried out by appropriately trained staff, using industry standard guidelines and models relevant to the collections, such as:

- Spectrum for museum objects
- Benchmarks for Collection Care
- The Digital Preservation Coalition's Rapid Assessment Model (DPC RAM), a benchmarking tool in Excel format that organisations can use to assess their own digital preservation capabilities.

These models inform the ongoing care and management of each collection and a professional preservation manager or conservator is consulted, if necessary. This professional expertise and advice is sought through UAL's membership of the National Conservation Service, following the closure of the Conservation Department at Camberwell College of Arts, which previously provided for this professional relationship.

Environmental conditions are monitored through remote, radio-controlled data-loggers which record temperature and relative humidity at the ASCC and other sites where collections are held across the UAL Estate. These data are collected and used to inform collection management decisions.

Guidelines on handling physical collections are issued to all archive users at ASCC and at other UAL sites. These guidelines have been developed in line with national standards and are enforced through professional invigilation of the archive user in the Seach Room or other identified space.

The impact of COVID-19 has affected collection care practices, such as remote environmental monitoring and on-site handling with social distancing and quarantine measures. Reflection on these changes to practice may highlight some lasting effects on collection care, which will be assessed post-pandemic.

6. Conservation

All archives, museum and special collections are managed to ensure that they are protected by suitable packaging materials and shelving, which meet archival and Spectrum standards. Conservation materials are purchased from reputable conservation suppliers. An appropriate amount of the non-staffing budget is allocated for the purchase of conservation supplies, depending on the needs of the archives and special collections. Collections for priority attention and preservation action are identified and audited, so that resources can be sought and allocated to their care.

7. Disaster planning and response

Library Services has a plan for business continuity which is supported by a contract with the disaster recovery company (Document SOS), with the aim of preventing, managing and recovering from any disasters affecting any of its physical collections.

The ASCC Strong Room is monitored 24/7 by UAL IT and alerts are issued to collection managers when environmental conditions are breached. A communication system is in place to facilitate on-site call-out of Estates staff, equipment engineers, collection managers or the disaster recovery company, as required, to attend to identified issues.

In the event of an identified disaster, large or small, the disaster recovery company will send in salvage experts who will advise and assist in the assessment of damage and the rescue and restoration of collections.

To support the disaster plan, the Finance Manager for Library and Student Services ensures that insurance schedules are kept up to date and where relevant, items or collections are named on the University's risk register, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Disaster planning and response for digital collections is outlined in the UAL Digital Preservation Policy.

8. Approval

This Collection Care and Conservation Policy was approved by the Archives, Museum and Special Collections Advisory Board on [18th May 2021]

9. Version Control

Review every 3 years